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THE RIDDLE OF BEAUTY.

BROWN bird of spring, on pinion soft
Ascending,
A voice to reddening dawn aloft
Thus lending;
Why was thy music made so sweet,
And thou so beautiful and fleet,
Light comer;
Bewildered in the stir and heat
Of summer?

White clouds, that o'er the still blue sky
Are pressing,
To pilot forth an argosy
Of blessing;
Ye glide with snowy sails unfurled
Above a dull, night-blinded world;
None caring
Whence ye those fleeces, golden-curled,
Are bearing.

Blue autumn flower, thy deep heart stores
Heaven's azure;
And o'er us from thy chalice pours
Rare pleasure.
The frost a plague, a blackness casts;
Thy fringe is torn when northern blasts
Grow stronger.
Men love thee while thy beauty lasts—
No longer.

Thou maiden, on whose lip and eye
Entwining,
The lovely tints of earth and sky
Are shining.
Thy sweet song dies; thy radiance must
Fade like a flower, by blight and dust
Overtaken;
And all the roots of earthly trust
Are shaken.

Ah, why should thus the beautiful
O'erbrood us,
And ever its harmonious rule
Elude us?
The grave its hopeless blot may be;
Largess to eyes that cannot see,
'Tis giving—
The joy, the pain, the mystery
Of living.

Say whence, oh Beauty, floatest thou?
And whither?
But in a shade, an echo, now
Swept hither.
Born with the sounds that hurry past?
Dead, with the shapes that fade so fast?
Oh never!
The soul of each fair thing must last
For ever.

The glory of the rose remains
Unfaded,
Though now no wreath from woodside lanes
Be braided.
A word unknown she drooping said;
A breath was in her from the dead
To waft her;
And Beauty's riddle shall be read
Hereafter.

LUOY LARCOM.

PUBLIC LECTURERS.

The present condition of American culture is well calculated to excite reflections upon the phenomena of the lecturing system as it is at present in operation in our midst. It is obvious that the new aspects of humanity which American civilization is constantly presenting, demand entirely new agencies of mental and moral discipline, so that in the upheaving of individual thought and action which freedom and energy are apt to produce, the immutable moral laws of society upon which all true progress rests, may ever be kept in view. Public lecturing is one of these agencies. Although not new in its inception, it is, in some measure, new in its practical application, and is therefore worthy of study. If we were going to discuss the subject fully, it would behove us to ascertain whether the system rests upon fixed principles, or whether it is a mere child of whim and fancy, or the sole result of the mental accidents and position of the lecturer. But this is not our object; we propose rather to make such comments as may indicate a general treatment of the subject than to aim at enforcing any dogmatic conclusion of our own.

No great sagacity is required to perceive at a glance that American society is emphatically in a preparatory condition. Here we are, after a hundred years of national existence, with the most heterogeneous population that was ever gathered together outside of Babel. There are, indeed, small intellectual cliques in New England, New York, and other sections of the country, which savor of a certain unity of thought, attainments and aspirations, but take our population as a whole, it forms a conglomerate for which there is yet no term in the mental geology of the world. Vague appellations must yield to estimates of individual character and individual capabilities. The question for a lecturer to decide, then, should not be "Is this my 'lecture a standard of abstract thought?'" but whether it is calculated for the benefit of the persons to whom it happens to be addressed. The present system of preparing a set lecture on a set subject, and delivering it at random all over the country, without the least reference to the mental or moral calibre of the audience, seems, if not farcical, at least inharmonious with the nature of true instruction.

Let us portray the position of a lecturer, and draw a couple of sketches to take the place of argument. We take, for instance, a young clergyman or a young littérateur, either of whom considers himself qualified by study and natural endowments for the sphere of lecturing; he pre-

pares a lecture on a subject which is most endeared to his mental sympathies, and which is intelligible to a home-audience. Presently, the lecturer appears on a public rostrum, not near the *alma mater* of his student life, with the same discourse, excellent in itself, but with this qualification, that it is not adapted to the experiences of men of the world. Listlessness and weariness steal over his hearers; the faintest attempt at pleasantry on the part of the lecturer is considered a god-send, and is hailed with demonstrations of applause, which, being really more expressive of relief than otherwise, is believed to be positive satisfaction with the lecturer's thought. Take another instance, that of an old and accomplished scholar, who passes his life in the study of books, or perchance in the avocations of the pulpit. He prepares a lecture on Confucius or Mendizabel which embodies the richest gems of his varied attainments, and which makes the delight of his immediate circle, and of the press in the interest of that circle. He produces that lecture before an audience composed of the intelligent women of New England, escorted by graduates of a college, who all receive it with a storm of applause. The worthy man, encouraged by this triumph, and the verdict of the papers, comes to New York. Here the applause grows fainter, not because of intentional disrespect to Confucius, Mendizabel, or the lecturer, but simply because the ideas are not clothed in such a shape as to challenge the sympathies of a differently constituted auditory. He travels to Cincinnati, and although the lecture-rooms may be crowded, the probability is that Confucius is voted a bore, Mendizabel a bugbear, and the unfortunate lecturer more antiquated than either. Here again it will be found that no offence to any of the three personages is intended; only the tone and spirit of the lecture are ill adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the audience. On his progress westward, his lecture will probably meet with a still cooler reception at Chicago; yet the worthy man will go on undaunted. He is not content to reach his home in the East, until he has given Philadelphia, Newark and Hoboken a taste of his powers. This applies not only to such outlandish subjects as those above named, but to many others, which, although possessed of more substantial claims to public interest, yet fail in producing any abiding effect from the fact of being handled in a stereotyped manner without the least application to the minds of the persons whom the lecturer aims to instruct and to animate. As we said before, these lectures may have been adapted to a select circle of cultivated people, and loudly applauded by them, but they are apt to fall dead upon a miscellaneous assembly.* Such an effect, however, is not at all considered. The

lecturer's reputation is made by report (not by reporters); because he was successful in one place he is invited to another. The lecturer seems apparently to care only for the business aspects of his calling, without the least consideration of the positive moral or mental condition of the audience that sends for him. And to this conventional, business-like and anarchical condition of the lecturing system may be ascribed the fact that lecturing, with all its noise and parade, has hitherto accomplished so little for the public good or even for the public entertainment.

We are studious to avoid all exaggerated illustrations of the subject, although it admits of caricature pictures. We honor the institution of public lecturing too much to use any disparagement even in reference to those whose inefficiency for the task which they dare to assume, would reduce censure to a simple application of truth and justice. But we desire to point to some principles. Now lectures, to be successful in a moral and intellectual respect, must be at least in some measure improvisations. They must be moulded in accordance with the nature of audiences, and come from persons who can show that they possess some decided practical knowledge of human nature. In the old countries of Europe, where the classes of society are more strongly defined, lectures are attended only by a certain number of persons who are attracted not so much (of course, we speak generally) by ordinary curiosity as by a specific interest in the subject announced for discussion. Dilettanti efforts are therefore adapted to the horizon of European lecture-rooms. But not so here. Lectures here should not so much reflect the learned or aesthetical idiosyncrasies of the lecturers; but rather be instinct with a personal ring of universal humanity and nature.

The question then arises, *What are the most suitable subjects?* Are they fragments of bygone histories dished up for the hundredth and thousandth time? Are they abstract discourses on ethics and morals? Are they abstruse elucidations of Art and Science? Are they hackneyed sketches of men and things which belong to a past civilization? Are they lucubrations on theology or geology? We are far from answering with a sweeping No. But we venture to say that, considering the superficial results of the educational advantages of our people, and considering the novelty of the civilization in which we find ourselves placed, we positively require a more intimate union of the lecturer's subject with practical life. We require merchants to lecture on commerce; not as it is in the dull pages of political economists; but as it is in Wall street, in State street, in South street, in Broad street,—as it is in reality. We require merchants' clerks to lecture on their relation to their employers; not as it is in the naked figures of the census, but in the living reality, clothed with all the variegated experiences which their daily life unfolds. We require artists to lecture on Art, not as it is in the abstract columns of an Art paper, or book on Art; but as

is received with cold indifference, or may even provoke sneers, in Glasgow.—BLACKIE.

* The man may have spoken much wisdom, and glowed with noble passion, and his sentences may have been rolled off with the easy weight of accomplished mastership; nevertheless, the effect was petty, and the speech was a mistake. Why? Because the speaker did not know his audience; because, even if he had known it, he might not have been able to tune his soul into harmony with it; and for this lack of congruity, the vivid flow of thought, and the grand flow of diction, that would have commanded unbounded applause at Oxford,

it is in their studio, as it is in relation to their experiences, again invested with all the interest of which the opportunities (and they are great) admit. We want clergymen to lecture on religion not as it is in the erudite lore of ecclesiastical paper and ink, but as it is in the drama of parish-life, as it is in relation to the thousand human vicissitudes, and catastrophes, and passions with which they are daily brought into contact. We want physicians to lecture on their profession, not as it is in the rubrics of medical colleges, but as it is in relation to the humanitarian experiences with which they are daily brought in collision. And the same discreet and practical mode of lecturing we should like to see adopted in all the various branches of human achievement.

The mass of incoherent, unconnected matter which is now presented to the attention of audiences is out of all proportion to the growing intelligence of the people; it dilettantes the public mind instead of invigorating it. The immense experiment which is being tried here—that of compelling every one, high and low, to support himself by labor, without, as in Europe, admitting of a small number of persons to fatten upon the toil of the poorly paid masses of their fellow beings—produces, in addition to other influences, a remarkably quick degree of intelligence. The most uneducated Yankee is at least intelligent enough to drop the silly servility to rank and power, which still cramps the manhood of the masses of Europe; he is at least intelligent enough to admit of no supremacy excepting that of intrinsic superiority of mind. Although, perhaps, overshadowed in large cities by the noise of newly imported funkeys and varnished pretenders to social pseudo-dignities, this sense of intelligence is not yet smothered in our people, and is, in fact, at the bottom of its extraordinary career of enterprise and energy. The practical result of this intelligence is to be found in the fact that our people are more interested in *one* merchant, or *one* clergymen, or *one* poet, or *one* artist, or *one* politician, or *one* savant, or even *one* humbug, who gives a succinct account of his personal experiences, his connection with general feelings, such as every one would experience, if placed in the same position, than in all the treatises or learned discourses on Commerce, Religion, Literature, Art, Politics, Science, Humbug, which have ever been published. To be interested in the latter must require philosophy and learning, which, in most cases, heterogeneous audiences have not; but to sympathize with broad ideas, when clothed in a living form, requires only intelligence and a quick sense of humanity, which they generally have. This instinctive force of intelligence among our people is so great that the most accomplished man of culture must do homage to it, *nolens volens*, by pandering to what is generally but vaguely termed popularity. When all has been urged against our people in proof of their glaring defects, this intelligence still remains as an irresistible evidence in their favor. It is this intelligence which puts our people in closer harmonies with the laws of nature, and hence with the religious laws and with first principles,

than any other people on earth. It is this intelligence which accounts for the love of gossip and of personalities. Instinctively it is felt that, when the last word about religion, poetry, art, law, commerce, philosophy, politics, is spoken, *man* and *woman* still remain as subjects of discussion. Hence lectures, education, religion, science, and art must assume a more personal shape in order to be interesting to this people. We do not wonder at the great success of Lola Montez. Here is a woman of genius, in a certain sense, who opens the world like an oyster, and who looks like a unit in the vast confusion of humanity. Here is individuality; and, although the example may not be felicitously chosen, we say that lecturers, unless they are competent to speak from their own experiences, will fail to exert an influence upon heterogeneous masses of people. Every individuality, if fully displayed, is nothing but a leaf of universal humanity. Any subject, therefore, brought to the lecture-room under the auspices of a competent person, who dilates upon it from his personal experiences or his individuality, will ever captivate the sympathies of our people. But no person should be considered as competent who is a shuffler on great moral principles. We submit that commerce, history, literature, politics, etc., can all be elucidated from a high moral point of view, and better no lecturers at all, unless we can find persons who can afford to be brilliant and entertaining without ceasing to be pure in heart and noble in thought. *

The universal and eternal admiration of Grecian sculpture is to be accounted for . . . because these matchless works of Art harmonize with fundamental principles of our nature. Nothing less universal and enduring than this could have maintained their peerless prestige throughout the revolutions of two thousand years,—amidst altered religions, altered politics, altered knowledge, altered kingdoms; in fine, amidst an utter obliteration of all old associations, and an altering of the nations themselves as has left no single one in any degree what it was. Still, nevertheless, radiant amid the ruins of the Past, these divine statues live on; and the world still bows before them in as fervent admiration as when first they met the gaze of delighted thousands in the Agora of Athens or on the Capitol of Rome. How inadequate, then, to attribute an admiration so general, so fervent, so undying, to mere abstract reflections on the costliness and durability of those master-pieces, and to the high thoughts associated with the race that produced them!—as if our admiration towards them were but the result of a tardy process of frigid thought, instead of the rapid and joyous leaping forth of heaven-born instinct.—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

True men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society by the soundness of their understanding, and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind. The ascendant which they acquire gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any production of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke which is pointed out to them.—*Hume*.